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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR G/TIP, G, INL, DRL, EUR/PGI, EUR/SE

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SUBJECT: TIP IN TURKEY: ISTANBUL SHELTER REPORTS SUCCESS WITH FIRST VICTIMS, BUT MORE CHALLENGES AHEAD

(U) Classified by Deputy Political Counselor Charles Blaha, E.O. 12958, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (U) SUMMARY. Anti-TIP NGOs International Office for Migration (IOM) and Human Resources Development Foundation (HRDF) reported the first successful repatriation this week of 3 Ukrainian trafficking victims through the Istanbul Human Trafficking Shelter. The event simultaneously highlighted momentum on GOT-NGO cooperation and exposed prejudices against victims that threaten the shelter's survival. END SUMMARY.

Fist Case a Success

2. (U) According to HRDF Executive Director Demet Gural, anti-TIP forces from the Turkish Jandarma conducted a November 1 raid in Istanbul's Silivri District, freeing 3 Ukrainian victims trafficked to Turkey two weeks earlier. The Jandarma referred the women to HRDF's Istanbul Shelter for Victims of Trafficking, the shelter's first experience managing trafficking victims. According to Gural, the victims told an HRDF therapist that they wanted to return home despite GOT offers to remain in Turkey for special legal and medical assistance. HRDF contacted IOM and the victims were escorted directly to their flights two days after arriving at the shelter. According to IOM Project Manager Meltem Ersoy, IOM Ukraine was waiting in Kiev to escort the victims to a reintegration center there.

3. (U) "This was a fortunate first case, the victims were willing to cooperate with shelter staff," Ersoy said. Ersoy also noted that the shelter's staff members are dual Ukrainian-Turkish nationals, speak the same language as the victims, and did everything they could to ease the trauma of the experience. Ersoy added that victims subjected to longer-term abuse and exploitation are generally aggressive, sometimes violent, and would likely prove much more difficult to control for the inexperienced, under-trained staff at the Istanbul shelter. "When you look at the current situation at the shelter, we're very lucky the women were cooperative; the staff couldn't have handled them otherwise."

4. (U) Ersoy said that quick and effective action by Turkish Jandarma led to recovery of the victims' passports and accelerated the repatriation process by several weeks. She also credits the swift repatriation to IOM's Jandarma training programs. "In most cases, traffickers destroy their victims' travel documents, so we can't immediately repatriate them. In this case, the training worked. The Jandarma knew these women were victims and they did everything they could to help, including recover their passports."

TIP Shelter Still a Sensitive, Struggling Enterprise

5. (C) Despite success with the Ukrainian victims, Gural cautioned that the TIP shelter, which will be housed in a temporary residential building until the lease expires in June 2005, remains a sensitive issue for the community and the target of "AKP religious hard-liners" in the Istanbul municipality "who view victims as less than human, non-Muslim prostitutes who get what they deserve." Gural noted the shelter is struggling to remain anonymous to avoid alerting 1) traffickers about the location of their victims; and, 2) local government officials who hope to stir anti-victim sentiment in the neighborhood.

6. (C) IOM Chief of Mission Marielle Lindstrom noted that the shelter currently operates without security officers -- a dangerous situation that, in addition to protecting victims against "traffickers who may attempt to reclaim their property", exposes staff members to the risk of injury by violent, uncontrollable victims. "There are a lot of problems that wouldn't pass inspection in the U.S., but we're working on them," Lindstrom said. Examples cited by Lindstrom range from access control issues to items of shelter furniture which are made of materials (such as glass) that pose safety issues for victims and staff. IOM plans to

gather GOT, NGO, and other key participants in early December 2004 to finalize an anti-TIP ESF grant proposal which, among other components, includes money for shelter management.

GOT Moves Closer to IOM Membership

17. (U) The semi-official Turkish Anatolia News Agency reported November 3 that the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) approved draft legislation paving the way for the GOT's full membership to IOM. Turkey is currently an observer state. The legislation now goes to the full TGNA for consideration. MFA DG for Consular Affairs Murat Ersavci and Security Directorate Foreigners Department Head Mehmet Terzioglu have independently asserted to us that Turkey will begin paying the annual 154,000 Swiss Franc IOM membership fee after IOM processes Turkey's application in December.

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